

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1 and 3 through 15 are pending in this application. The Office Action objects to claims 6 through 8 and 10 through 14 but allows these claims if rewritten into independent form.

The Office Action rejects claims 1 through 3 and 9 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 3,621,640 to Ohno et al. (hereinafter "Ohno"). This rejection is moot as to claim 2, which has been cancelled. Applicants submit that Ohno fails to disclose or even suggest the features of claim 1 of first, second and third filters provided in a consecutive order, with the pores of the second filter being smaller than those of the first filter, the pores of the third filter being smaller than those of the second filter, and the dust-laden air drawn in through the connecting hole passes through the first, the second and the third filters in turn.

Ohno shows a main filter 13 and a pre-filter 16, with a bypass filter 37 disposed in parallel with the bypass filter, i.e., above and between the pre-filter and main filter. Main filter 13 is a single filter that provides collection of fine dust particles three dimensionally:

The main filter 13 or the sheet of the filtering element is manufactured as follows: Fibers such as Nylon fibers are cut to length of 10-15 cm, and these fibers are applied needling to be entangled with one another. Then a latex or other elastic material in liquid form such as rubber or synthetic resins are sprayed on the needled sheet of fibers, thereafter is vulcanized under a heated and pressurized condition so that the fibers are coated with thin layers of the elastic material as well as connected with one another by the elastic material, whereby an elastic sheet 13a having fine meshes is obtained. After applying a bonding agent on the surface of the sheet, the sheet is then bonded to a napped cloth 13b having relatively rough meshes of about 20 mesh (international standard), **whereby the filtering element of about 10 mesh is obtained.** (col. 4, lines 7-22)(emphasis added).

Ohno fails to disclose or suggest the features of claim 1 of first, second and third filters that are porous in nature and provided in a consecutive order. The pores of the second filter being smaller than those of the first filter, the pores of the third filter being smaller than those of the second filter, and the dust-laden air being drawn in through the connecting hole passes through the first, the second and the third filters in turn, as recited in claim 1. Claims 3 and 9 depend from claim 1 and, thus, are also not anticipated by Ohno.

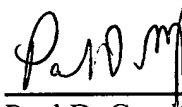
The Office Action rejects claims 1 through 5 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent Application No. 2004/0205926 to Fawcett (hereinafter "Fawcett"). This rejection is moot as to claim 2, which has been cancelled. Applicants submit that Fawcett fails to disclose or even suggest the feature of claim 1 of the filter assembly comprising first, second and third filters which are porous in nature and provided in a consecutive order, with the pores of the second filter being smaller than those of the first filter, the pores of the third filter being smaller than those of the second filter, and the dust-laden air drawn in through the connecting hole passes through the first, the second and the third filters in turn.

Fawcett shows a screen pre-filter 76 and then a filter element 68 disposed along the path of air-flow, as represented by arrows 84 in FIG. 5. The filter element 68 includes a first inner layer formed of a melt-blown polypropylene, a second middle layer formed of a spun-bond polyester and an outer third layer formed of an expanded polytetrafluoro-ethylene (ePTFE) membrane. (page 2, par. 36). Fawcett fails to disclose or suggest the features of claim 1 of first, second and third filters that are porous in nature and provided in a consecutive order. The pores of the second filter being smaller than those of the first filter, the pores of the third filter being smaller than those of the second filter, and the dust-laden air being drawn in through the connecting hole passes through the first, the second and the third filters in turn, as recited in claim 1.

Claims 3 through 5 and 15 depend from claim 1 and, thus, are also not anticipated by Fawcett.

In view of the foregoing, applicants respectfully submit that all claims present in this application patentably distinguish over the cited prior art. Accordingly, applicants respectfully request favorable reconsideration and withdrawal of the objections and rejections of the claims. Also, applicants respectfully request that this application be passed to allowance.

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Paul D. Greeley
Reg. No. 31,019
Attorney for Applicant
Ohlandt, Greeley, Ruggiero
& Perle, LLP
One Landmark Square, 10th Floor
Stamford, CT 06901-2682
telephone (203) 327-4500
fax (203) 327-6401